



Williams, Larry &lt;larry\_williams@fws.gov&gt;

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## Hot Topics

5 messages

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**Warren, Ken** <ken\_warren@fws.gov>  
To: Larry Williams <larry\_williams@fws.gov>  
Cc: Bob Progulske <donald\_progulske@fws.gov>

Wed, Sep 5, 2018 at 10:18 AM

Hi Larry,

Here are six of the seven hot topics. The only one missing is "Everglades Restoration Consultations/Projects." I talked to Bob about this morning, he said he'd get it to me...

### 1. Panama City Crayfish

On March 1, 2018, Florida Congressman Neal Dunn (R-2nd) sent a letter to Secretary Zinke expressing concern about the proposed listing of the Panama City crayfish as "threatened" under the ESA. The congressman feels the species is adequately protected as a State Species of Special Concern, and he believes the Service's evaluation for increased protection uses an inaccurate assessment of the population. The Service responded with explanations of the Service's requirements to consider the ESA's 5 listing factors. One of these factors considers sufficiency of existing regulatory processes of which the State of Florida currently has no process in place. The proposed rule was published in the Federal Register in January 3, 2018, which opened a 60-day public comment period. There has been substantial media coverage on this proposed rule. Public interest--particularly among the business/real estate development community--is high. Bay County passed a resolution to not support federal listing, but has begun consulting with the Service on projects that may impact the species and habitat. After discussion with many stakeholders, a 4D rule could remove a lot of angst as it could allow consultation exemptions for forestry practices, minor developments, ditch maintenance, and power line work. A proposed critical habitat rule and 4D rule are expected to be published before January 2019.

### 2. Eastern Collier Multi-Species HCP

With assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a group of landowners and non-governmental conservation agencies have developed the proposed Eastern Collier Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and are seeking an Incidental Take Permit from the Service. This HCP looks at how to minimize impacts to wildlife while developing 45,000 acres of residential and commercial areas, and mining within 152,000 acres of rural, agricultural and wild lands. The plan is intended to protect 16 different species listed under the Endangered Species Act, including the Florida scrub jay, Florida bonneted bat and Florida panther. In addition to reviewing the status of the HCP, the applicants and the Service are working through the steps and schedules necessary to get it done and complete the required incidental take permit and National Environmental Policy Act processes. Although media coverage has been sporadic, there is considerable public interest in the development of these lands.

### 3. Blue-green algae bloom for Lake Okeechobee water releases

On June 13, 2018, Florida Congressman Brian Mast (R-18th) formally requested that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigate "...polluting of the Indian River Lagoon and the endangerment of the threatened manatee..." Rep. Mast has been focused on harmful algae blooms and other water quality issues in his District. The Service worked with partners to review relative science and compiled a five-page report that will be sent to the Congressman. The report finds no manatee deaths or illnesses tied directly to pollution. However, there is evidence pollution is indirectly affecting manatee health. In addition, Mr. Mast held a public meeting with senior representatives from the DOI, the Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District on August 17, 2018 to address the algae issue. There was local media coverage of the public meeting.

### 4. Red Tide Event

On August 15, 2018, Florida Congressman Francis Rooney (R-19th) toured areas on the coast of SW Florida that are being negatively impacted by this year's Red Tide event. Mr. Rooney was accompanied on this tour by senior representatives from the DOI, the Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Several local business and civic leaders were also on hand giving facts about economic losses and declining real estate values. News media representatives were present, as well. Dozens of manatees, hundreds of sea turtles and scores of fish have died due to this Red Tide event. The Service provided personnel to help FWC survey and necropsy affected wildlife and is organizing a working group of subject matter experts from agencies including USGS and

FWC to analyze the red tides--which are recurring events--to see if there is anything we can do to better predict, prevent and/or abate them. Rep. Rooney is also focused on the harmful algae blooms in the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

#### 5. Miami Yacht Show consultation

The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) requested consultation on June 29, 2018, for the relocation of a large Yacht Show in Miami, scheduled for February 2019. South Florida Ecological Services (SFESO) office has a large volume of consultation requests and they are processed in the order in which they are determined to be data sufficient. The Service received a Congressional letter of support for the event on July 17, 2018 from several local elected House of Representatives, and further inquiries from Senator Nelson's office on July 26, 2018. Although the project is not in compliance with the County's Manatee Protection Plan, this is expected to be an informal consultation on the West Indian manatee based on our understanding from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that the applicants have been working with the State and County to implement additional measures to minimize impacts to manatees. The SFESO is coordinating with the Corps to ensure that our consultation is completed in a timely manner, and in ample time before the event. The Corps is still working through outstanding concerns with the applicant for their permit.

#### 6. Florida grasshopper sparrow conservation

Despite focused, species-specific habitat management efforts on public lands, sharp declines in Florida grasshopper sparrow (FGSP) populations have been observed in recent years and the subspecies is nearing extinction. The Service and our State partners, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, are working to finalize a 5-year Vision strategy to present to management this week that outlines next steps for the program, including releases of captive-raised FGSP back to the wild along with associated success criteria. The release of captive birds, which is intended to stabilize the wild population, is contingent on a Disease Risk Assessment scheduled for fall 2018. The program is currently struggling to identify sufficient funds to implement all the desired components of the program including ongoing captive breeding and release. Our efforts to save this species have received substantial media coverage.

#### 7. Everglades Restoration Projects/Consultations

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Ken Warren  
Public Affairs Officer  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
South Florida Ecological Services Office  
[1339 20th Street](#)  
[Vero Beach, FL 32960-3559](#)  
Office Phone: 772.469.4323  
Mobile Phone: 772.643.4407

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Warren, Ken <ken\_warren@fws.gov>

Wed, Sep 5, 2018 at 1:48 PM

To: Larry Williams <larry\_williams@fws.gov>

Cc: Bob Progulske <donald\_progulske@fws.gov>, Roxanna Hinzman <roxanna\_hinzman@fws.gov>, Catherine Phillips <catherine\_phillips@fws.gov>, Patricia Kelly <Patricia\_Kelly@fws.gov>, Sean Blomquist <sean\_blomquist@fws.gov>,

Ashleigh Blackford <ashleigh\_blackford@fws.gov>, Constance Cassler <constance\_cassler@fws.gov>, "Kelso, Charles" <charles\_kelso@fws.gov>

Hi Larry,

Here are the seven hot topics. Thanks to everyone who pitched in to get these done.

#### 1. Panama City Crayfish

On March 1, 2018, Florida Congressman Neal Dunn (R-2nd) sent a letter to Secretary Zinke expressing concern about the proposed listing of the Panama City crayfish as "threatened" under the ESA. The congressman feels the species is adequately protected as a State Species of Special Concern, and he believes the Service's evaluation for increased protection uses an inaccurate assessment of the population. The Service responded with explanations of the Service's requirements to consider the ESA's 5 listing factors. One of these factors considers sufficiency of existing regulatory processes of which the State of Florida currently has no process in place. The proposed rule was published in the Federal Register in January 3, 2018, which opened a 60-day public comment period. There has been substantial media coverage on this proposed rule. Public interest--particularly among the business/real estate development community--is high. Bay County passed a resolution to not support federal listing, but has begun consulting with the Service on projects that may impact the species and habitat. After discussion with many stakeholders, a 4D rule could remove a lot of angst as it could allow consultation exemptions for forestry practices, minor developments, ditch maintenance, and power line work. A proposed critical habitat rule and 4D rule are expected to be published before January 2019.

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#### 7. Everglades Restoration Projects and Consultations

August 1 marked a major milestone in Everglades Restoration when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had the flexibility to raise water levels in the L-29 Canal to 8.3 feet. The Service, DOI, Corps and many other agencies worked for decades to send more water down this canal, but many obstacles were in the way. The agencies had to secure private land easements, build hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure to avoid flooding houses and farm land, and complete NEPA and other planning documents. Getting more water into this canal moves more water into the natural flow path and gets more water into the places that need it, like Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, and out of the places that don't need it, like habitat areas for the endangered Cape Sable seaside sparrow. A few days earlier on July 27, the Service issued a concurrence letter to the Corps on the Lake Okeechobee Portable Forward Pumps. The Service, Corps and South Florida Water Management District worked for several years to revise ESA consultations on the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) and the portable pumps that are used in the Lake-which provides water for drinking, agriculture and ecosystem benefits for hundreds of endangered snail kites and other species. There has been relatively no media coverage of these milestones.

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**Williams, Larry** <larry\_williams@fws.gov>

Wed, Sep 5, 2018 at 2:05 PM

To: Victoria Davis <victoria\_davis@fws.gov>

Cc: Ken Warren <Ken\_Warren@fws.gov>, LeeAnn Kelso <LeeAnn\_Kelso@fws.gov>, Leopoldo Miranda <Leopoldo\_Miranda@fws.gov>, Jack Arnold <jack\_arnold@fws.gov>

Victoria,  
Here are our hot topics.

Best regards,

Larry

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Larry Williams  
State Supervisor for Ecological Services  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1339 20th Street  
Vero Beach, FL 32960-3559  
Ph: 772-469-4285  
Fax: 772-778-0683  
[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)

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**Davis, Victoria** <victoria\_davis@fws.gov>

Wed, Sep 5, 2018 at 2:36 PM

To: "Williams, Larry" <larry\_williams@fws.gov>

Thank you!

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--victoria

Victoria Davis  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services, Chief of Staff  
1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Telephone: 404/679-4176

Facsimile: 404/679-7081

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**Warren, Ken** <ken\_warren@fws.gov>

Mon, Dec 10, 2018 at 11:27 AM

To: Larry Williams <larry\_williams@fws.gov>, Roxanna Hinzman <roxanna\_hinzman@fws.gov>, Bob Progulske <donald\_progulske@fws.gov>, Jay Herrington <jay\_herrington@fws.gov>, Heath Rauschenberger <heath\_rauschenberger@fws.gov>, Catherine Phillips <catherine\_phillips@fws.gov>, Sean Blomquist <sean\_blomquist@fws.gov>

Cc: "Gonzalez, Rafael" <rafael\_gonzalez@fws.gov>, "Kelso, LeeAnn" <leeann\_kelso@fws.gov>, Jose Rivera <jose\_rivera@fws.gov>

As discussed, here are the "hot topics" sent forward a few weeks ago. Looking for paragraphs of about the same length for the eight topics we're going to include on the info memo for the Everglades Coalition. Those eight and the POCs for each are:

PC Crayfish - Cathy  
Eastern Collier MSHCP - Rox  
Florida grasshopper sparrow potential releases - Rox  
EAA Reservoir - Bob  
Cape Sable seaside sparrow update - Bob  
Zoo Tampa Manatees Issue - Jay  
Manatees and pollution/Congressman Mast report - Jay  
404 Assumption - Jay

Looking forward to having your input by COB, Friday, Dec. 14.

Thanks.

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